P 43/5

A SPECIAL STUDY

FEDERAL PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SINCE CIVIL SERVICE REFORM:

A Survey of Federal Personnel Officials

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A Report to the President
and the Congress of the United States
by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

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THE CHAIRMAN

U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20419

November 1989

Sirs:

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. 1204(a)(3), it is my honor to submit this Merit Systems Protection Board report titled "Federal Personnel Management Since Civil Service Reform: A Survey of Federal Personnel Officials."

This report summarizes the results of a 1988 Board survey of Federal Personnel Specialists. These results are examined within the broader context of whether expectations for the Federal personnel management system envisioned by the Civil Service Reform Act have been realized, from the standpoint of those working in Federal personnel management. Some of the specific program areas and initiatives addressed include:

- Prohibited personnel practices and mechanisms to handle abuses of the system;
- Delegation of personnel authorities;
- Performance management systems;
- Activities of the Office of Personnel Management; and
- Recruitment and selection initiatives.

I believe you will find this report useful as you consider issues regarding the efficient and effective management of the Federal civilian work force. The perceptions and ideas offered by Federal personnel specialists are particularly useful in the evaluation of existing personnel programs and policies, and provide valuable information for policy planning purposes.

Respectfully,

Daniel R. Levinson

Daniel R. Levinson

The President
The President of the Senate
The Speaker of the House of Representatives

Washington, DC

FEDERAL PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SINCE CIVIL SERVICE REFORM:

A SURVEY OF FEDERAL PERSONNEL OFFICIALS

A Report to the President
and the Congress of the United States
by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

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OVERVIEW

With the passage of the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) came many expectations for improvements to the Federal personnel management system. Critical to the evaluation of how well the changes and initiatives launched by CSRA have affected the way over 2.1 million Federal civilian employees are managed are the views of those "in the business"--i.e., Federal personnel specialists. These individuals are responsible for ensuring that personnel actions taken every day throughout the Federal Government adhere to the laws, regulations, and policies intended to guide these actions, while also ensuring that their agencies are able to effectively utilize their work forces toward mission accomplishment. In order to gain the benefits of personnel specialists' insight and experiences, the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) surveyed these employees to determine their perceptions concerning the operation of the civil service system.

Results from our survey indicate that although personnel specialists do not believe some personnel programs are meeting the needs of employees and managers as intended by CSRA, many see positive benefits in personnel programs and initiatives of recent years. For example, of the personnel specialists responding to our survey:

- **Fewer than 1 percent** have observed employees being pressured to contribute to a political campaign or participate in political activity;
- **83 percent** believe that increased delegation of personnel authorities from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to agencies can lead to improved personnel management;
- **66 percent** believe the amount of personnel authority delegated to line managers is about right;
- **77 percent** note that their agencies use results of personnel regulatory compliance reviews to take corrective action, and;
- **55 percent** believe the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program has caused their agencies to identify qualified minorities and women applicants (compared to only 10 percent of respondents to a 1980 survey).

Personnel specialists' viewpoints were less positive concerning some other personnel programs and initiatives, however. Specifically, of those responding to our survey:

- **Fewer than one-third** believe the performance management systems created by CSRA have improved organizational effectiveness;
- **Only 29 percent** believe OPM has been effective in monitoring agency personnel systems to detect abuses;

- **Only half (49 percent)** believe that protections established for individuals attempting to expose prohibited personnel practices are adequate;
- Although few report observing most prohibited personnel practices, **43 percent** indicate that they have observed a job selection based on friendship rather than merit; and
- **21 percent** report observing a person being denied a job or job reward because of his or her race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, compared to **8 percent** of the personnel specialists reporting such observations in a 1980 survey.

All in all, our findings suggest that while personnel specialists see some improvements in the civil service system as a result of CSRA initiatives, there are still many unmet expectations for the system. Personnel specialists comprise an informed and vocal group. Their opinions, concerns, and recommendations for change can provide a unique perspective on personnel management issues which can aid those tasked with making Federal personnel management policy.

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Who launches rockets into space, conducts cancer and AIDS research, explores new sources of energy, tracks and apprehends felons, provides for the National defense, directs traffic 20,000 feet in the air, and protects the environment? These are just a few of the myriad services provided by some of the estimated 2 million civilian Federal employees in public service today. Understandably, the management of such valuable human resources is an immense task. Unfortunately, the personnel management system designed to accomplish this task has been historically viewed as overly complex, cumbersome, excessively bureaucratic, and largely ineffective. However, in 1978, the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) was passed to change all of that.

The Federal personnel management system envisioned by CSRA's creators was one which would facilitate improved work force productivity and effectiveness by giving agency managers more flexibility and providing them with new tools (e.g., performance management systems) to accomplish those goals. At the same time, at the foundation of the reformed personnel management system would be a set of merit principles, designed to keep the system free of prohibited personnel practices. The proponents of CSRA also anticipated that the newly created Office of Personnel Management (OPM) would assume a leadership role by providing both assistance and oversight to agencies as they implemented new personnel programs.

Has the original vision been realized? Have things improved in the Federal personnel management arena since the implementation of CSRA? There are numerous ways to examine these questions, but one of the most direct is to ask those individuals working in the Federal personnel field. Federal personnel specialists provide the personnel management support that agencies need in order to accomplish their missions. Personnel specialists assist managers in meeting such needs as recruitment, selection, training, and evaluation of the work force. At the same time, personnel specialists ensure that the personnel management actions they take, as well as those taken by agency managers, adhere to the laws and regulations governing the civil service system. Because personnel specialists have the opportunity to view first-hand the results of new programs and policy changes established by CSRA, their experiences and perceptions about the personnel management system can be an important indicator of the extent to which the new Federal personnel management system has fulfilled initial expectations of CSRA.

To gain the benefit of their insight and experience, MSPB undertook a study to examine personnel specialists' views concerning the health of the Federal personnel management system. We asked personnel specialists questions about the design, implementation, and operation of various personnel programs and initiatives resulting from CSRA, as well as about activities of OPM. This report discusses the findings from this study, within the context of the broader question, "Have we realized those initial expectations for our Federal personnel management system since implementing CSRA?"

METHODOLOGY

In June 1988 we sent questionnaires to a stratified sample of 5,507 Federal personnel specialists. Some 3,500 questionnaires were returned, representing a 64-percent response rate. Our survey group included a sample of both supervisory and nonsupervisory individuals in grades 11 and above, classified in the following job series: 201 (Personnel Management), 212 (Personnel Staffing), 221 (Position Classification), 230 (Employee Relations), 233 (Labor Relations), 235 (Employee Development), and 260 (Equal Employment Opportunity). Additional information concerning the sample group is presented in appendix 1. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in appendix 2.

In this report, we often compare results of our 1988 survey of Federal personnel specialists with results from two other surveys conducted by the Board. The first of these is the 1980 survey of Federal personnel specialists, which covered many of the same issues we included in our 1988 survey of these specialists. The 1980 survey differed from the one in 1988, however, in that the survey sample was limited to senior personnel specialists (i.e., grades 15 and above in the Washington, DC, area and grades 13 and above outside the Washington, DC, area). Also, employees in the EEO specialty field were not included in the 1980 survey.

The second earlier survey mentioned in this report is the 1986 Merit Principles Survey. The Board administered a Merit Principles Survey to a nationwide sample of Federal employees in 1983 and 1986, and is currently conducting a 1989 survey. This survey elicits employees' opinions on a wide range of personnel management issues.

When reporting survey responses, we typically cite the percentage of respondents answering a particular way (e.g., "20 percent agree"). Percentages reported for each question may not total 100 percent because of rounding or, in some cases, because we do not report the percentage of employees who responded "don't know" to the question.

MAJOR FINDINGS

PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICES

Background

One of the primary purposes of the 1978 CSRA was to provide a Federal personnel management system "consistent with merit system principles and free from prohibited personnel practices."[1] Designers of the Act increased the authority and powers of MSPB and the Office of the Special Counsel to ensure that employees were adequately protected against prohibited personnel practices. Additionally, the Act directed the Board to conduct studies to determine if the civil service system is free of prohibited personnel practices. Since passage of CSRA, the Board has conducted a number of studies to determine the extent to which the system has remained free of these practices. The conclusion that might be drawn from these studies' findings is that, generally, the civil service system appears free from most prohibited practices. The studies indicate, nonetheless, that there are a few practices that a sizable percentage of employees, managers, and personnel specialists alike view as occurring in the Federal system. Below, we discuss personnel specialists' experiences concerning the occurrence of prohibited personnel practices.

Interpretation of Percentage Data

In considering personnel specialists' experiences concerning prohibited personnel practices, it is important to note that the percentages we cite do not represent incidence of the prohibited practices--they merely represent the percentage of our respondents who observed the practice *at least once* during the past 12 months. For example, a finding that 23 percent of the respondents observed a job selection based on family relationship does not mean that 23 percent of the selections in the Federal Government are based on family relationships; it means only that 23 percent of the respondents witnessed such a practice at least once in the past year. In this example, it is conceivable that two or more respondents who work in the same office or agency are basing their answers to the question about family relationships on the same incident.

Personnel Specialists' Experiences

Practices Observed by a Sizable Number of Respondents. It is somewhat disturbing to note that, of the prohibited personnel practices we questioned personnel specialists about, almost half of these practices were observed at least once in the past year by at least 1 out of every 10 of our respondents. In fact, some were observed by almost one-quarter of our respondents. Several of these prohibited practices involve selections for jobs or job rewards based on nonmerit factors, including:

[1] 5 U.S.C. 1101; see the note titled Findings and Statement of Purpose in Supplement 1988.

- Family relationship
- Race
- Color
- Religion
- Sex
- National origin
- Age

Two prohibited personnel practices which concern retaliation against employees were each observed at least once by approximately one-fifth of the respondents.

In addition, 12 percent of the responding personnel specialists report observing an employee being pressured by a supervisor for sexual favors. A 1988 Board study reported a high incidence of sexual harassment in the Federal work force (i.e., 42 percent of the women and 14 percent of the men responded to a survey that they had experienced some form of sexual harassment).[2] However, of those victims, fewer than one-third (29 percent of the women and 19 percent of the men) were sexually harassed by supervisors. Based on the figures in the report on the Board's sexual harassment study, it is not surprising that the percentage of personnel specialists who report observing sexual harassment by supervisors is relatively small compared to the overall incidence of sexual harassment reported by employees.

Selection Based on Friendship. As can be seen in figure 1, the one prohibited personnel practice that by far the greatest percentage (43 percent) of personnel specialists observed concerns the "buddy system" (i.e., job selection based on friendship rather than merit). This is consistent with previous Board reports which have noted that many Federal employees believe they have experienced this practice.[3] Findings such as these concerning abuses of the merit system are very disturbing, and warrant further investigation. While it may be conceivable that some selections which appear to observers to be based on friendship are primarily based on merit, our attitudinal data cannot provide any clear indications that this is the case. For example, the person selected for a job may be the best qualified candidate for the job or job reward, but may also happen to be personally acquainted with the selecting official or someone known to the selecting official. On the other hand, the selection may have been based on friendship.

Practices Observed by Few Respondents. The nine remaining prohibited personnel practices listed in figure 1 were each observed by fewer than 10 percent of the respondents. However, as small as some of the percentages are, it is still disconcerting that these activities are being seen at all in the Federal work place.

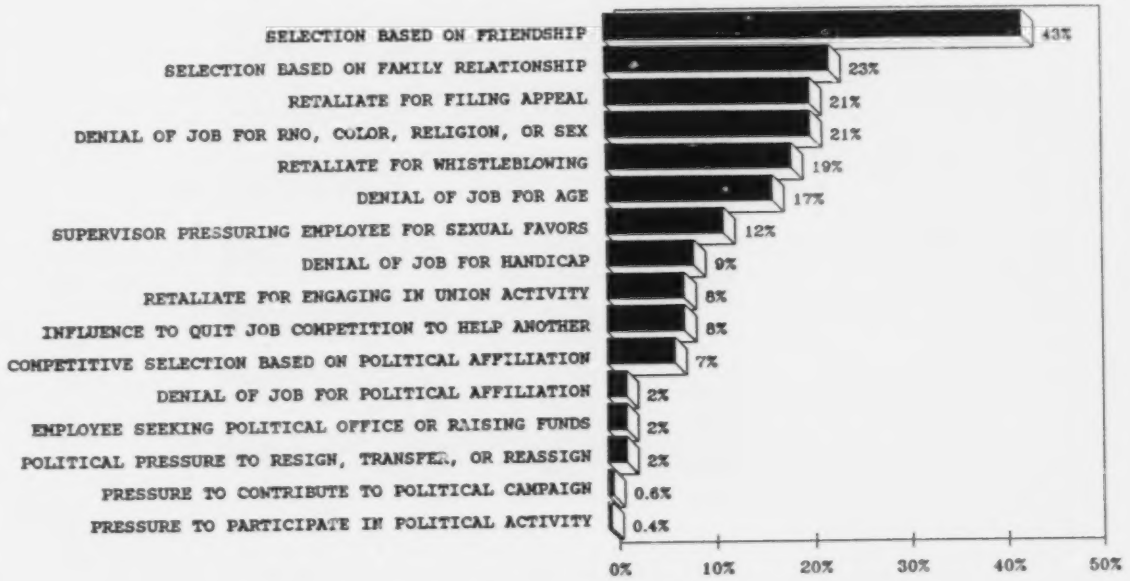
Comparison With 1980 Survey Results. In comparing the results from the 1980 and 1988 surveys of personnel specialists, we find very similar percentages of respondents reporting that they observed the prohibited personnel practices listed in both surveys. One very disturbing difference, however, is the sizable increase in the percentage of respondents who report observing a person being denied a job or job reward because of his or her race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. While 21 percent of those

[2] U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "Sexual Harassment in the Federal Government: An Update," June 1988, p. 11.

[3] For example, see U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "Federal Personnel Policies and Practices--Perspectives from the Workplace," December 1987, p. 16.

Figure 1.

Percentage of Personnel Specialists Indicating They Observed Selected Prohibited Personnel Practices, 1988*



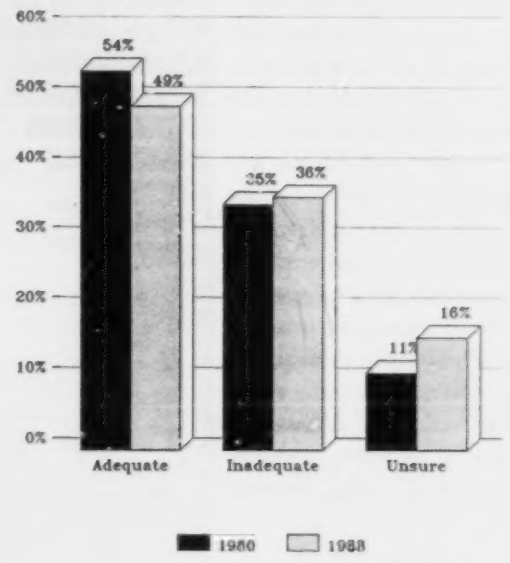
***Based on respondents' observations during the previous 12 months.**

surveyed in 1988 report observing this practice at least once, only 8 percent of those surveyed in 1980 had ever observed it, representing an increase of 13 percent. We first suspected that this increase could be partially due to the fact that EEO specialists were included in our 1988 survey but not in our 1980 survey. Because EEO specialists handle complaints for the prohibited practice under discussion, we thought they might have more opportunity to observe this practice than other personnel specialists. However, even when EEO specialists are excluded from the data analysis, the figure doesn't change much--there is still a 10-percent increase from 1980.

Handling Abuses of the System

Protections for Those Exposing Abuses. Considering the frequency of personnel specialists who report observing the listed prohibited personnel practices at least once, it is troublesome to note that only half of our respondents (49 percent) believe that the protections for persons attempting to expose prohibited personnel practices are adequate. As can be seen in figure 2, these results are very similar to those found in our 1980 survey of Federal personnel specialists.

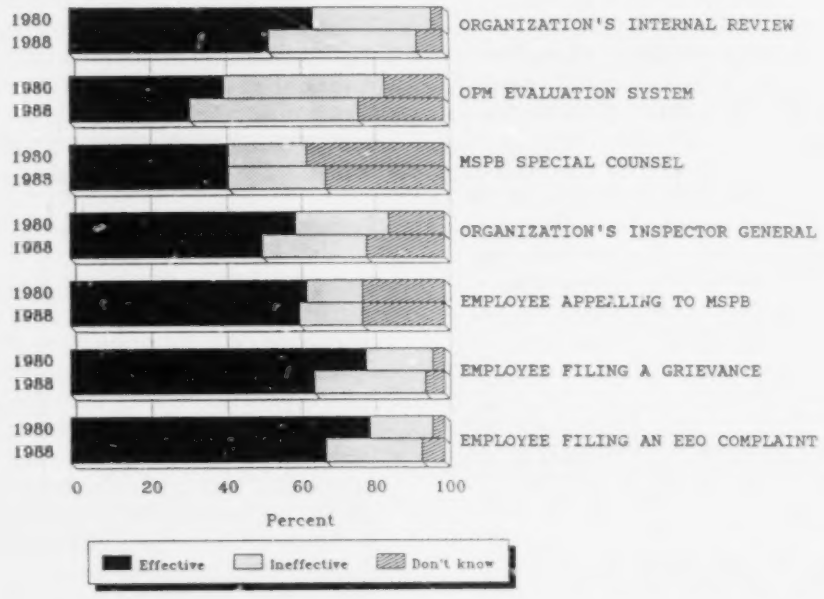
Figure 2.
Respondents' Opinions Concerning Adequacy of Protections for Those Attempting to Expose Prohibited Personnel Practices, 1980 and 1988



Effectiveness of Oversight Authorities. Personnel specialists responding to our survey also provided opinions on the effectiveness of different oversight authorities and appeal mechanisms in correcting personnel abuses. Figure 3 depicts results from both the 1980 and 1988 surveys of Federal personnel specialists. As can be seen in figure 3, opinions concerning the relative effectiveness of the various merit systems safeguards remain much the same. However, for almost every mechanism we mentioned in the surveys, fewer respondents in 1988 than in 1980 perceive the mechanism as effective. The most notable declines in perceived effectiveness are for a grievance, an EEO complaint, and the organization's internal personnel management review system. What's perhaps most disturbing is that at least three-fourths of 1988's respondents see none of the listed mechanisms as effective in correcting a personnel abuse--a finding somewhat more negative than the comparable one for 1980.

Agency Emphasis on Ensuring Against Abuse. We were also interested in how personnel specialists view the emphasis their own agencies place on employees' protections against prohibited personnel practices and other abuses of the system. In assessing their own agencies' effectiveness in this regard, the majority of personnel specialists feel that their agencies placed appropriate emphasis on:

Figure 3.
Perceived Effectiveness of Authorities for Correcting Personnel Abuses, 1980 and 1988



- Complying with the merit principles (69 percent of respondents)

- Enforcing personnel laws, rules, and regulations (70 percent)

- Protecting employee rights (66 percent)

These results are very similar to those of the 1980 survey of personnel specialists, in which nearly three-fourths of the respondents (74 percent) said that the amount of emphasis placed on employee rights and enforcing personnel laws and regulations was about right.

Summary

These data concerning the observation of prohibited personnel practices by personnel specialists indicate that while the system is generally free of these practices, there is some evidence that abuses do exist. And, even though the practices which were observed by the greatest number of personnel specialists in 1980 are still the ones observed by the highest percentage in 1988, there has been a slight increase in the number of personnel specialists observing these practices. Also of concern is the finding that personnel specialists have somewhat less confidence in the effectiveness of most of the protections established to correct these abuses than they had 8 years ago.

Thus, the answer to the question of whether expectations for a civil service system free from prohibited practices have been met may be "not yet." Nine of the sixteen prohibited personnel practices we listed were observed at least once during the past year by fewer than 10 percent of our respondents. However, because some of the remaining seven practices were observed by fairly sizable percentages at least once in the previous 12 months, and because a sizable share of respondents voice concern over the adequacy of some of the protections established for employees, we cannot say that the original expectations for the system have been fully realized.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

Background

One of the purposes of CSRA was to promote a more efficient and effective work force. In order to achieve this goal, CSRA provided that "the function of filling positions and other personnel functions * * * be delegated to the agencies."[4] Authority to take personnel actions can be delegated from OPM to agencies, from high-level personnel authorities within agencies to lower level personnel authorities or from agency heads (or designees, such as personnel offices) to line managers. It was intended that such delegations would expedite personnel actions, as well as provide agency managers with needed flexibility. The issue of delegation of personnel authorities has received much attention over the last decade; the Board has published no fewer than eight reports which have at least touched on the subject. Given that personnel specialists' work is very directly affected by delegation of authority, we believe that what they have to say about the topic can be quite revealing in terms of initial expectations concerning effects of delegation. Their opinions and experiences are discussed below.

Personnel Specialists' Experiences

Delegation From OPM to Agencies. Personnel specialists appear to approve of delegation of authorities from OPM to agencies. In asking their opinions concerning the general issue of delegation of personnel authority from OPM to agencies, we found 83 percent believe at least to some extent that increased delegation of personnel authorities from OPM to agencies can lead to improved personnel management. This finding is supported by a recent MSPB study which concluded that Federal departments and agencies are pleased with the increased delegations they have received from OPM.[5]

However, only 60 percent of the personnel specialists responding to our 1988 survey believe the amount of authority their organizations have to take personnel actions without prior approval from OPM is about right. Twenty-eight percent believe the amount of authority delegated to their agencies from OPM is too little. Similarly, 22 percent of the personnel specialists responding in 1980 felt OPM delegated too little authority to agencies.

[4] 5 U.S.C. 1101, Supp. 1988.

[5] U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "Delegation and Decentralization: Personnel Management Simplification Efforts in the Federal Government," October 1989, p. 1.

Table 1

Personnel Specialists' Views Concerning the Impact of Delegating Personnel Authorities to Line Managers, 1988

"To what extent do you believe that increased delegation of personnel authorities from agency personnel offices to line managers, if taken, can lead to improved personnel management in the Federal work force?"

	Percent of Respondents Who Said:		
Agency of Respondents	**Some Extent or Greater**	**Little or No Extent**	**Don't Know**
Agriculture	56	42	1
Commerce	70	28	2
Air Force	64	31	4
Army	70	27	3
Navy	58	39	3
Other Dod	65	32	3
Energy	59	41	0
General Services Admin.	38	59	3
Health and Human Services	55	38	6
Interior	59	39	2
Justice	64	32	4
NASA	67	32	1
Office of Personnel Management	58	40	2
Transportation	56	42	2
Treasury	55	40	4
Veterans Affairs	55	42	3
All Others	50	47	3

Personnel specialists responding to the 1988 survey provided numerous written comments concerning delegation of personnel authorities from OPM to agency personnel offices. Generally, these comments are very favorable. The majority of them note how delegations of authority for examining and direct-hiring (i.e., evaluating and selecting applicants without OPM's involvement) have greatly aided agencies' recruitment and selection efforts. A few respondents, however, do express concern that misuse of these delegations may be compromising the merit system.

Delegation From Personnel Offices to Line Managers.

> Line managers should be responsible for hiring, firing, promoting, and rewarding employees. No one knows the job better than the line manager."
>
> - Survey Respondent

> "If one wishes to maintain a degree of consistency throughout the Government * * * most current activities and responsibilities assigned to Personnel Offices should remain in the hands of these 'experts.' Most line officials have neither the expertise nor the time nor the desire to be concerned with the legalities of personnel programs."
>
> - Survey Respondent

Personnel specialists view delegation of authority from agency personnel offices to line managers somewhat less favorably than they view delegation from OPM to agencies. Whereas 83 percent of respondents believe that delegation of authorities from OPM to agency personnel offices can lead to improved personnel management, only 60 percent believe the same is true of delegation from personnel offices to line managers.

Personnel specialists' opinions on the issue of delegation vary somewhat by agency, however. For example, as can be seen in table 1, 70 percent of respondents from the Department of Commerce and the Department of the Army believe increased delegations of personnel authorities to line managers can lead to improved personnel management. On the other hand, a much smaller percentage of personnel specialists from General Services Administration (38 percent) believe this is the case. The diversity of perceptions among personnel specialists may be due to organizational differences, such as types of functions delegated, agencies' particular missions, or differences in organizational philosophies and climates.

Overall, 66 percent of our respondents believe the current amount of authority delegated to line managers is about right. Only 10 percent believe line managers have too much authority, and 22 percent believe they have too little.

When asked about the amount of emphasis their organizations place on supporting management flexibility, 58 percent responded that the amount is about right, and 25 percent said that it's too much. (Interestingly, when personnel specialists in our 1980 survey were asked about the amount of emphasis their agencies placed on supporting management flexibility, 67 percent responded that it was about right, and 20 percent said it was too much.) Written comments provided by some of our 1988 respondents highlight some of the concerns brought about by agencies' emphasis on supporting management flexibility, with typical concerns alleging some compromise of the integrity of the merit system.

> "An increased focus on management flexibility has undermined the necessary balance between management needs and (the operation of) the merit principles. Eagerness to be responsive to managers has led the way to ignoring laws, * * * rules, and regulations."
>
> - Survey Respondent

Summary

Our survey data provide limited evidence that the CSRA intention that OPM would delegate authority to agencies is being realized and that most personnel specialists see this trend as positive. And delegations of authority from personnel offices to line managers are also taking place, though not all personnel specialists see these delegations as a positive change. It is somewhat disturbing, however, that the very flexibility that CSRA intended to give line managers in taking personnel actions is cause for concern by some personnel specialists. Some personnel specialists may believe, as one respondent suggests, that because managers are not sufficiently trained in personnel laws and regulations, there is increased likelihood of abuse with more delegation to managers. Because of this belief, some personnel specialists may be extremely cautious or less

Table 2.

Personnel Specialists' Perceptions Concerning Performance Management Systems, 1988

"In your opinion, what impact has each of the three performance appraisal systems had on your organization's effectiveness?"

System	Percent of Respondents Who Said: Greatly or Somewhat Improved	No Impact	Greatly or Somewhat Impeded
Performance Management System	29	44	28
Performance Management and Recognition System	27	39	35
Senior Executive Service	25	54	21

than enthusiastic in promoting delegations of authority to line managers. Such a reaction could ultimately undermine agencies' attempts to provide managers with increased flexibility.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Background

The effort to provide agencies with tools to effectively manage individual job performance has become one of the most controversial of all the initiatives growing out of CSRA. Three performance management systems, largely developed as a result of CSRA, were intended to tie performance appraisals to pay, awards, and other personnel actions. The performance management systems implemented as a result of CSRA include the Performance Management System (PMS) for General Schedule and Federal Wage System employees, and the Performance Management and Recognition System (PMRS) for managers and management officials. A third performance management system was inherent in the design of the Senior Executive Service (SES), a personnel management system created by CSRA for Federal senior executives. It was expected that the three systems would provide managers with the means to motivate employees toward higher levels of productivity and effectiveness. Unfortunately, these performance management systems have failed to meet the original high expectations for them.

In a 1988 report on Federal performance management programs, MSPB found that although these "programs are basically sound in concept * * * problems diminish their practical effectiveness."[6] This same

[6] U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "Toward Effective Performance Management in the Federal Government," July 1988, p. v.

report further notes that 55 percent of employees responding to MSPB's 1986 Merit Principles Survey did not see a linkage between performance and pay. Other data from the 1986 Merit Principles Survey indicate that respondents view the operation of the performance management systems as less effective than was originally hoped.

Personnel Specialists' Views on the Performance Management Systems

Our 1988 personnel specialist survey results show that those responsible for the implementation and day-to-day operation of the three performance management systems view each of the systems in a negative light. When asked specifically about each of the systems, respondents knowledgeable of them indicate that the systems either have had no impact on organizational effectiveness or have impeded it (see table 2).

As can be seen in table 2, even for the system viewed most positively (i.e., PMS, which covers General Schedule and Federal Wage System employees), only 29 percent of those expressing an opinion believe that it has improved organizational effectiveness, and 72 percent believe that it has had no impact on effectiveness or has impeded it. It is interesting to note that, in 1980, when asked about the *expected* impact of the new performance management system covering the General Schedule and Federal Wage System employees, 49 percent believed that the system would have no impact on productivity or would impede it. Thus, if one considers organizational effectiveness as one indicator of productivity, the rather negative expectations expressed in 1980 about PMS's impact have been borne out in practice.

Written comments provided by personnel specialists responding to the 1988 survey reveal differing viewpoints concerning various aspects of the three performance management systems. The problem of inadequate funding to support the systems, is frequently noted by respondents as a reason the systems have not met their original expectations.

> "The performance management system generally is a bureaucratic nightmare. The PMRS does not have the funding to meaningfully reward high performers."
> - Survey Respondent

However, other personnel specialists note that the systems have helped improve supervisors' communication of job expectations to employees. Clear communication of performance expectations is a critical component of effective performance management. Nonetheless, the general consensus among personnel specialists providing written comments is that while there have been some benefits resulting from these new performance management systems, the systems require too much paperwork, are still too subjective, and aren't backed by the funding required to adequately meet performance management needs.

Summary

Although some respondents note in their written comments positive aspects of the three performance management systems (e.g., the systems encourage communication of performance expectations between supervisors and employees), the systems have been plagued with other problems which have prohibited them from realizing initial

expectations. Clearly, personnel specialists knowledgeable of the day-to-day operation of these systems do not believe they have served as useful managerial tools for improving productivity and enhancing organizational effectiveness. Unfortunately, as noted in a 1988 MSPB report on Federal performance management programs, these views mirror the views of employees and managers using the systems.[7]

ACTIVITIES OF OPM

Background

The Office of Personnel Management, a centralized personnel management agency created by CSRA, was expected by the reformers to provide leadership, guidance, and oversight to Federal agencies. The act anticipated that OPM would "Delegate personnel management authorities judiciously to other Federal agencies. * * * Establish and maintain an aggressive oversight program to ensure that Federal personnel management authorities are being used in accordance with the merit system principles * * *. Conduct or facilitate the conduct of research and demonstration projects * * *. Execute, administer, and enforce civil service laws, rules, and regulations * * *."[8]

Tasked by CSRA with the responsibility of annually evaluating OPM's performance regarding these functions, MSPB has issued numerous reports on OPM's "significant actions" since 1980. Various sources of data are used in the Board's evaluation process (e.g., agency responses to formal inquiries we send to them, statistical data from OPM, and results from surveys of Federal employees). Aside from these sources, however, personnel specialists' experiences and perceptions provide very useful information concerning how well OPM has fulfilled CSRA's expectations for it. Because agency personnel specialists are often directly involved in or affected by OPM activities, they are in a unique position to assess OPM's effectiveness in performing its many functions. For this reason, our 1988 survey of personnel specialists included many questions concerning OPM's activities and responsibilities.

And how did OPM fare in their assessment? As can be seen in table 3, personnel specialists view OPM's performance in a rather negative light. The findings for each of OPM's major functions are discussed below.

Evaluation and Oversight

Some of OPM's most critical activities are those associated with fulfilling its evaluation and oversight responsibilities. OPM's role is to ensure that agencies' personnel actions are consistent with personnel laws and regulations, and that the Federal personnel system remains free from prohibited personnel practices. Although CSRA intended agencies to share in the responsibility for ensuring that their personnel actions comply with the law, OPM was to assume the leadership role in this regard.

OPM has performed its evaluation and oversight functions largely through its personnel management evaluation process. Initially, this process involved conducting

[7] U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, op. cit., July 1988.

[8] 5 U.S.C. 1101, Supp. 1988.

Table 3.

Personnel Specialists' Perceptions Concerning the Effectiveness of OPM Activities, 1988

"How effective do you feel that OPM has been in the following of its activities over the past 2 years?"

- Monitoring agency personnel systems to detect possible abuses
  - **29%** Effective or Very Effective
  - **48%** Ineffective or Very Ineffective
  - **23%** Don't Know

- Evaluating how agency use of "human resources" affects success of line programs
  - **17%** Effective or Very Effective
  - **49%** Ineffective or Very Ineffective
  - **34%** Don't Know

- Providing general management and supervisory training
  - **57%** Effective or Very Effective
  - **28%** Ineffective or Very Ineffective
  - **14%** Don't Know

- Providing technical assistance and support on implementation of new programs or initiatives
  - **44%** Effective or Very Effective
  - **40%** Ineffective or Very Ineffective
  - **16%** Don't Know

- Providing information and assistance to the public concerning availability of Federal employment
  - **31%** Effective or Very Effective
  - **53%** Ineffective or Very Ineffective
  - **16%** Don't Know

- Carrying out personnel research and development efforts directly or in cooperation with agencies
  - **24%** Effective or Very Effective
  - **29%** Ineffective or Very Ineffective
  - **47%** Don't Know

- Assisting agencies in improving their personnel programs and systems
  - **25%** Effective or Very Effective
  - **50%** Ineffective or Very Ineffective
  - **25%** Don't Know

- Initiating efforts to improve the Federal personnel management system by simplification and deregulation
  - **43%** Effective or Very Effective
  - **44%** Ineffective or Very Ineffective
  - **13%** Don't Know

intensive, case-oriented (i.e., individual personnel actions) compliance reviews at agencies to ensure agencies' adherence to relevant laws and regulations. In late 1983, OPM made major changes to its personnel management evaluation activities, moving toward broader, systemic information gathering and analysis.

In light of this change in orientation, we were interested in learning: (1) whether agencies' efforts in personnel management evaluation reflected OPM's change in emphasis (i.e., have agencies followed OPM's lead and moved away from case-oriented compliance reviews?); (2) whether agencies are using the information gathered from personnel management evaluations to ensure regulatory compliance and to uncover systemic problems or abuses in their personnel activities; (3) and how personnel specialists view OPM's effectiveness in performing its oversight and evaluation functions.

As for whether agencies have moved away from compliance-oriented reviews, we found that over half (58 percent) of our respondents believe at least to some extent that their agencies' current evaluation programs place more emphasis on regulatory compliance reviews than on broad-based, information gathering and analysis. Additionally, almost three-fourths of the respondents note that their own organizations perform periodic reviews of individual personnel actions specifically for the purpose of assuring proper application of laws, regulations, or procedures. Thus, agencies are still conducting compliance-oriented reviews, although we can't determine from these data the actual rate at which they are conducting such reviews versus more broad-based reviews. Nonetheless, these data suggest that agencies have not yet followed OPM's lead in changing emphasis in personnel management evaluation from a compliance-oriented approach to more broad-based, systemic analysis.

Even though agencies have not followed OPM's lead in changing emphasis for oversight and evaluation, it is encouraging to note that personnel specialists indicate their agencies use the information gathered through the compliance review process. Most respondents (77 percent) believe that the results of the regulatory compliance reviews are used by the agencies to take corrective action. A much smaller percentage (59 percent) view these evaluation activities as enabling their organizations to identify human resource management problems and to help improve organizational effectiveness, as intended by OPM's change in personnel management evaluation emphasis.

With regard to general opinions about OPM's effectiveness in oversight and evaluation, only 29 percent of the personnel specialists responding to our 1988 survey believe OPM has been effective in monitoring agency personnel systems to detect abuses, and 48 percent believe OPM has been ineffective in this activity. These results are somewhat more negative than those found in our 1980 survey, in which 41 percent of the respondents thought OPM was effective in monitoring agency systems and 46 percent believed OPM was ineffective.

Additionally, only 17 percent of our 1988 respondents believe that OPM has been effective in evaluating how agencies' use of human resources affects success of line programs, compared with 49 percent who

Table 4.

Personnel Specialists' Perceptions Concerning OPM's Oversight of Performance Management Systems, 1988

"Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of OPM's oversight of each of the performance appraisal systems in your organization over the past 2 years?"

System	Percent of Respondents Who Said: Effective or Very Effective	Ineffective or Very Ineffective
Performance Management System	34	66
Performance Management and Recognition System	34	66
Senior Executive Service	41	59

believe OPM has been ineffective. However, when we asked about this activity in 1980, 57 percent of respondents believed that OPM had been ineffective in evaluating agency use of resources.

One specific area of OPM oversight and evaluation in which we were interested concerns the implementation of the three performance management systems which came about as a result of CSRA. Because these systems are very different from the Government's previous performance management systems, and because the "stakes" are now higher concerning the consequences of the performance management process (e.g., pay and awards are more directly affected by performance evaluations), we were very interested in learning of personnel specialists' experiences and views concerning OPM's oversight of these systems.

Of those respondents who expressed an opinion on OPM's performance management oversight, over half believe that OPM's oversight of these programs has been ineffective. Table 4 depicts their responses concerning OPM's oversight of each of the three performance management systems.

The negative finding concerning personnel specialists' views on OPM's oversight of the performance management systems is somewhat surprising, in light of the attention OPM has given performance management in the past several years. As noted in the Board's 1988 report on performance management, OPM's activities in recent years have included:

> Oversight over agency implementation of significant program changes (e.g., Merit Pay, PMRS, and the Performance Management System);
>
> Increased emphasis of this subject in personnel management evaluation (PME) programs (i.e., making it one of five areas reviewed during Installation

Table 5.

Personnel Specialists' Perceptions Concerning the Quality of OPM'S Policy Guidance on Performance Management Systems, 1988

"Overall, how would you rate the policy guidance which OPM has issued on each of the performance appraisal systems over the past 2 years?"

System	Percent of Respondents Who Said: Good or Very Good	Fair	Poor
Performance Management System	37	44	19
Performance Management and Recognition System	37	44	19
Senior Executive Service	40	43	17

Assessment Visits and one of three focus areas contained in Personnel Management Indicator Reports);

Development of analytical tools to monitor and analyze performance management patterns and trends (e.g., PerMIS data base);

Issuance of regulations to strengthen the linkage between performance and personnel decisions (e.g., new regulations on reduction in force (RIF) and incentive awards); and

Preparation of special reports on PMRS as required by law * * *.[9]

Advice and Assistance

Another important OPM function is to provide agencies (and the general public) with advice and assistance concerning Federal personnel management programs and initiatives. Although there are many programs and initiatives for which OPM provides advice and assistance, in table 5 and in the analysis below we focus on a few about which personnel specialists have been very vocal in the past few years.

In the 10 years since three performance management systems were introduced via CSRA, numerous changes have been made in the systems. As these changes have been made, OPM has provided agencies with relevant policy guidance. As can be seen in table 5, personnel specialists are generally favorable about the quality of OPM's policy guidance on the three systems. In fact, if one compares their perceptions concerning the quality of policy guidance with perceptions on the effectiveness of OPM's oversight, it is clear that personnel specialists believe OPM has done a much better job in providing guidance than oversight.

[9] U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, op. cit., July 1988, p. 34.

When asked about OPM's overall performance in providing technical assistance and support related to implementing new programs and initiatives, almost half of the respondents (44 percent) said they believe that OPM has been effective. However, nearly as many (40 percent) believe OPM has been ineffective with regard to advice and assistance given. Responses are even more negative concerning OPM's assistance to agencies in improving their personnel programs and systems: only 25 percent of the respondents believe OPM has been effective, while 50 percent believe OPM has been ineffective.

Personnel specialists are also fairly negative concerning the information and assistance OPM provides to the public concerning the availability of Federal employment: 31 percent of respondents say OPM has been effective in providing this information and assistance, but 53 percent feel OPM has been ineffective. This finding is corroborated by written comments provided by respondents to the 1988 survey. Many respondents noted that the reduction in the number of OPM's Federal Job Information Centers and OPM's subsequent switch to automated operations in the remaining centers have hampered civil service recruitment efforts.

> "Our local Job Information Center has become less and less accessible for the general public * * * the information available in the unmanned (automated) Federal Job Information Center is woefully insufficient to attract high quality candidates to the Federal arena."
>
> - Survey Respondent

A forthcoming MSPB report will discuss in greater detail some of OPM's recent initiatives in the area of Federal recruitment and selection.

Improvement of the Federal Personnel Management System

Personnel specialists gave OPM only slightly higher marks for some of its activities to provide programs or initiatives for improving the Federal personnel management system. For example, 57 percent of the responding personnel specialists believe OPM has been effective in providing general management and supervisory training. Forty-three percent of the respondents believe OPM's efforts to improve the Federal personnel management system by simplification and deregulation have been effective; however, just as many respondents (44 percent) believe OPM has been ineffective in this regard. This split in opinions is reflected in respondents' written comments. For example, several respondents note that OPM's efforts to simplify and make other needed changes in regulations (e.g., X-118 Qualification Standards which define applicant requirements for Federal positions) have had a positive impact on the civil service system. However, others believe that OPM has not yet fulfilled promises it made concerning deregulation and simplification and even when OPM makes changes, it fails to communicate the changes to agencies in a timely manner.

Summary

In terms of its evaluation and oversight role, most agencies do not appear to be following OPM's lead regarding emphasizing broader information-gathering and analysis versus compliance-oriented reviews of personnel actions. However, personnel specialists do indicate that the agencies are using the compliance information collected to take action needed to correct any problems found. It is disturbing, however, that approximately half of the personnel specialists responding don't believe that OPM has been effective in monitoring agency personnel systems to detect abuses.

Insofar as its advice and assistance function is concerned, OPM fares somewhat better. Although personnel specialists are skeptical concerning the effectiveness of the advice and assistance OPM offers the public regarding Federal employment, they give OPM higher marks regarding the quality of the policy advice and assistance it gives to agencies concerning the performance management systems.

Finally, OPM's attempts to improve the Federal personnel management system through training, simplification, and deregulation have generally been favorably received by personnel specialists. Nonetheless, numerous respondents note that OPM still has work to do in this area.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Background

Besides aiming to promote an efficient and effective Federal work force, CSRA was designed to promote a "competent, honest, and productive Federal work force reflective of the Nation's diversity."[10] The first merit principle mandated for the system stated that "Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity."[11]

The Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program

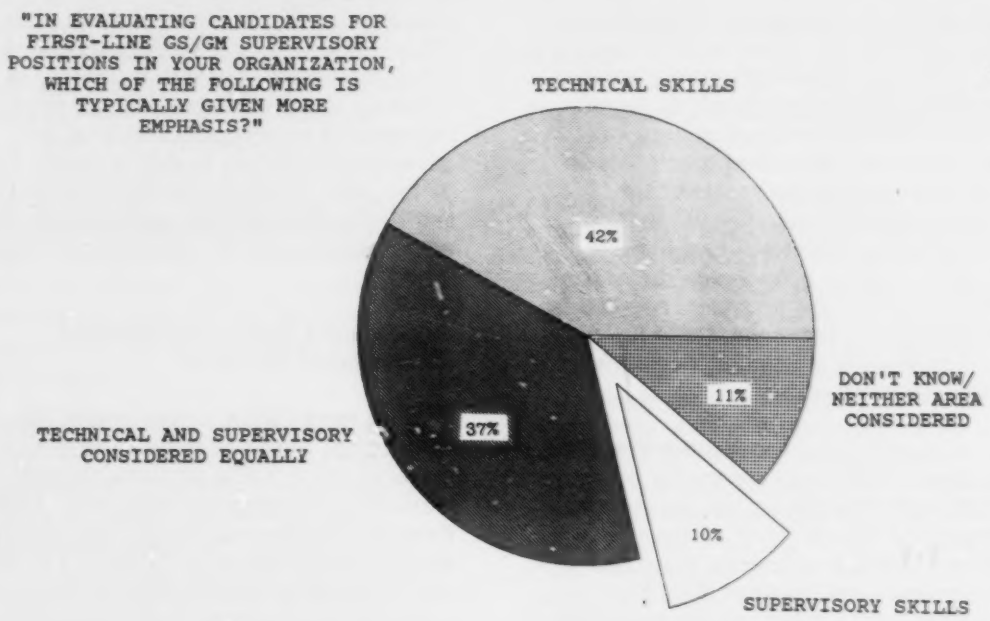
To help meet CSRA's expectation that recruitment would be from all segments of the work force, OPM implemented special recruiting and selection initiatives. One of these was the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP). FEORP was designed to eliminate the underrepresentation of minorities and women in various categories of Federal civil service employment by increasing their presence in the applicant pool (i.e., by increasing recruitment efforts targeting those groups). As one indicator of the extent to which Federal agencies have met CSRA's objective of providing a work force which reflects the Nation's work force population, we asked personnel specialists about their experiences with FEORP.

Of those respondents who know about their agencies' FEORP efforts, 55 percent feel that the program caused their organiza-

[10] 5 U.S.C. 1101, Supp. 1988.

[11] 5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(1).

Figure 4.
Respondents' Perceptions of Their Agencies' Emphasis in Evaluating Candidates for First-Line Supervisory Positions, 1988


"IN EVALUATING CANDIDATES FOR FIRST-LINE GS/GM SUPERVISORY POSITIONS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS TYPICALLY GIVEN MORE EMPHASIS?"
TECHNICAL SKILLS
42%
DON'T KNOW/ NEITHER AREA CONSIDERED
11%
TECHNICAL AND SUPERVISORY CONSIDERED EQUALLY
37%
10%
SUPERVISORY SKILLS

tions to identify and hire qualified women and minority applicants who otherwise would not have been recruited. In 1980, we asked personnel specialists whether FEORP produced highly qualified women and minority applicants. Only 10 percent of the respondents in 1980 believed FEORP had produced such applicants. However, the 1988 FEORP question asked about "identification and hiring of qualified applicants," whereas the 1980 question asked about "producing highly qualified applicants". Although this wording modification could partially account for differences in the responses, the 55 percent in 1988 is so much higher than 1980's 10 percent that we believe it represents a dramatic, positive change in perceptions concerning FEORP's accomplishment of the CSRA goal. Perhaps increased experience with the program has brought about more favorable perceptions concerning its effectiveness.

Supervisory Selection

One key to the effectiveness and efficiency with which the Federal work force is managed is the quality of those responsible for managing. As noted in a previous MSPB study, first-line supervisors play a critical role in this regard.[12] And although the se-

[12] U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, "First-Line Supervisory Selection in the Federal Government," June 1989, p. 1.

lection of first-line supervisors in the Federal Government is an important undertaking for agencies, it is a task for which many agencies continue to seek more effective strategies. The Board's supervisory selection study found that a preponderance of agencies use the same approach for selecting supervisors as they do for selecting employees for nonsupervisory positions. This finding is borne out by results from our 1988 survey of personnel specialists, in which only 37 percent of respondents knowledgeable of methods their agencies use to select supervisors report that techniques, forms, methods, etc. designed solely for the purpose of evaluating "supervisory aptitudes" are used in their agencies.

Given the responsibilities that first-line supervisors have in managing subordinates (and the large percentage of time most first-line supervisors spend performing "supervisory tasks"), one might expect that agencies would emphasize "supervisory" skills and abilities in the selection process, as opposed to expertise in the technical area. However, as can be seen in figure 4, when agencies evaluate candidates for supervisory positions, candidates' competence in the technical area is emphasized most, according to respondents. Only 10 percent say their organizations give primary emphasis to supervisory skills and abilities.

Thus, these results provide limited evidence that agencies may not be as concerned about the supervisory excellence of first-line management as is necessary to ensure effective and efficient management of the work force. Insofar as the quality of supervision can play an important role in the productivity and effectiveness of the work group, increased attention to the selection of supervisors is critical to meet expectations defined by CSRA.

Written Comments Concerning Recruitment and Selection

As mentioned previously, 1988 survey respondents' written comments note that increased delegations of authority for examining and direct hiring by agencies have greatly aided in recruitment and selection efforts. Many respondents also note that the implementation and use of special salary rates have helped them recruit for hard-to-fill positions. However, as mentioned above, the closing of many Federal Job Information Centers and changes in operation of remaining centers have impeded agency efforts to recruit applicants into the civil service, according to many respondents.

Summary

Results from our 1988 survey indicate that some progress has been made toward providing an efficient and effective work force through Federal recruitment and selection efforts. However, some initiatives in this area (e.g., operation of Federal Job Information Centers and agency strategies for selecting first-line supervisors) need further attention.

CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions can we draw from this medley of findings? First of all, in comparing 1980 and 1988 survey results, it is clear that respondents are still highly skeptical about whether CSRA's expectations for the civil service system have been fulfilled. For most issues addressed by the surveys, the same general perceptions were revealed in both 1988 and 1980 (e.g., the particular prohibited personnel practices observed by the highest frequency of personnel specialists in 1988 are the same ones observed by the greatest number of specialists in 1980). Nonetheless, there appears to be a trend toward more negative perceptions regarding most issues addressed. Personnel specialists are somewhat less positive now about the effectiveness of performance management systems; the eradication of prohibited personnel practices and the ability of mechanisms to deal with system abuses; and the effectiveness of OPM activities.

On the other hand, there are rays of hope. Personnel specialists are now more positive about the effectiveness of FEORP than they were in 1980. Respondents to the 1988 survey also mention other initiatives which they feel have had a positive impact on Federal recruitment and selection. Personnel specialists responding indicate that their agencies are conducting compliance-oriented personnel management evaluations, and using the information collected through these evaluations to take corrective action. (However, we still question whether agencies are shifting their evaluations toward the more systemic, information-gathering approach now emphasized by OPM.) Our respondents also note that some OPM activities--such as the change in the X-118 Qualification Standards--have had a positive impact on the operation of the civil service system. Many personnel specialists believe that increased delegations of personnel authorities from OPM to agencies and from personnel offices to line managers are having positive effects on the civil service system. However, some respondents remain concerned about how much can be delegated without compromising the integrity of the system.

Thus, although there are positive findings about the health of the merit system, our 1988 survey indicates that many of CSRA's expectations for the civil service system have not yet been realized, at least from the viewpoint of Federal personnel specialists. Some of the initiatives or programs falling short of CSRA expectations are becoming critical concerns for Federal personnel management. In an era of mounting budget deficits and "doing more with less," there is concern over whether the Nation will have a Federal work force capable of meeting the future needs of our society. Therefore, it is very important that efficient and effective use is made of our Federal work force, as was intended by CSRA. In order to accomplish this, all concerned with the Federal civil service will need to continue to evaluate the progress being made toward this goal, relying at least in part on the perceptions and ideas offered by those who may be more familiar with the system than anyone else--our Federal personnel specialists.

APPENDIX 1:
SURVEY SAMPLE

Statistics that we compiled on the respondents to our 1988 questionnaire indicate that the majority (61 percent) of those responding work outside the metropolitan Washington, DC, area. Forty-one percent of our respondents work in the 201 series (Personnel Management), which is the most populous personnel job series. The remaining respondents are divided fairly evenly among the other series surveyed. Almost three-fourths (72 percent) have worked in the Federal Personnel field 10 years or more. Fifty-four percent of the respondents are in grades 11-12, 43 percent are in grades 13-15, and 2 percent are SES or equivalent.

Eighty-five percent of our respondents were employed in the civil service before enactment of the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act, although they were not necessarily employed in personnel management. We asked survey participants to indicate the primary function of the personnel offices in which they work. Functions include operating (i.e., providing day-to-day personnel services to an organization), staff (i.e., writing policy, providing guidance to other personnel specialists, evaluating programs), and a combination of the two. Thirty-six percent work in operating offices, 14 percent in staff offices, and 39 percent in offices that serve both staff and operating functions (remaining respondents did not report the primary function of their offices).

APPENDIX 2:
1988 SURVEY OF FEDERAL PERSONNEL SPECIALISTS

U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20419

Dear Federal Personnel Specialist:

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB)--an independent Federal agency created by Congress in 1978--needs your help. We've developed the attached questionnaire to help us examine specific personnel management issues and evaluate the current health of the civil service system. We believe that you, a professional in Federal personnel, can provide valuable insight for our study by completing this questionnaire.

The questions will give you the opportunity to share your observations, experiences, and opinions on a range of critical issues. Your responses will be confidential. Please don't put your name anywhere on the questionnaire.

We're distributing the questionnaire to a nationwide random sample of Personnel Specialists in grades 11 and above. Our sample represents only a small share of Federal Personnel Specialists; thus, it is extremely important that you complete and return the questionnaire. You may answer the questions at work or in the privacy of your home. You'll be able to complete the questionnaire in about 45 minutes.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed postage-paid envelope within 5 days after you receive it. If you'd like a copy of the reports we publish using questionnaire results, please write to us at the address given on the next page.

We very much appreciate your taking time to complete this questionnaire. Our study's usefulness in helping to make the Federal Government a better place in which to work depends upon your frank and careful responses.

Sincerely,

Evangeline W. Swift

Evangeline W. Swift
Director, Office of
Policy and Evaluation

The Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution 1787-1987

U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20419

1988 SURVEY OF FEDERAL PERSONNEL SPECIALISTS

This questionnaire asks you to share your opinions and experiences on a variety of personnel management issues. The questions are divided into the following topical areas:

- Merit principles and prohibited personnel practices
- General effectiveness of personnel programs and activities
- Effectiveness of specific personnel programs
- Recent developments in Federal personnel management
- Demographic information
- Comments on personnel management issues

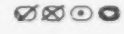
You may not need to answer every question in this survey. Instructions throughout the questionnaire will tell you which questions to skip.

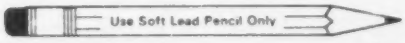
MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- DON'T use ink or ballpoint pens.
- Erase completely and cleanly any answer you wish to change.
- Don't make any stray marks in this booklet.

CORRECT MARK:

INCORRECT MARKS:





PRIVACY ACT NOTICE

Collection of the requested information is authorized by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-454). Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and none of the information you choose to supply will be associated with you individually.

REPORT REQUEST ADDRESS

If you would like a copy of the reports published as a result of this survey, please address your request to:

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board
Office of Policy and Evaluation
1120 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20419

1988 SURVEY OF FEDERAL PERSONNELISTS

1. The largest organizational unit for which I can best judge the quality of personnel management is my: (Please mark only one)

① Entire Department, major agency, bureau, or command

② The *headquarters* office of my Department or agency

③ A *regional office or field installation* of my Department or agency

2. About which Office of Personnel Management (OPM) office are you most knowledgeable? (Please mark only one)

① Central Office (Headquarters)

② Regional and/or Area Offices

SECTION 1

3. During the past 12 months, have you personally observed any of the following practices in your organization?

	No	Yes, one instance	Yes, more than one instance
a. An employee being pressured to contribute to a political campaign	①	②	③
b. An employee being pressured to participate in partisan political activity	①	②	③
c. An employee actively seeking partisan political office or raising funds on behalf of a partisan political candidate	①	②	③
d. A career employee being pressured to resign, transfer, or accept reassignment because of his/her political affiliation	①	②	③
e. An appointment to the competitive service made as a result of political party affiliation	①	②	③
f. A selection for job or job reward based on family relationship	①	②	③
g. A selection for job or job reward based on personal friendship rather than qualifications	①	②	③
h. An attempt to influence someone to withdraw from competition for a Federal job in order to help another person's chances	①	②	③
i. An attempt to retaliate against someone because he or she disclosed some wrongful activity in the agency	①	②	③
j. An attempt to retaliate against someone because he or she filed a formal appeal	①	②	③
k. An attempt to retaliate against someone because he or she engaged in lawful union activity	①	②	③
l. An employee being pressured by a supervisor for sexual favors	①	②	③
m. A person being denied a job or job reward because of his/her race, color, religion, sex, or national origin	①	②	③
n. A person being denied a job or job reward because of his/her age	①	②	③
o. A person being denied a job or job reward because of his/her handicap unrelated to job requirements	①	②	③
p. A person being denied a job or job reward because of his/her political affiliation	①	②	③

4. In your opinion, how adequate are the protections presently available to persons attempting to expose prohibited personnel practices within the Federal Government? (Please mark only one)

① Very adequate

② Somewhat adequate

③ Inadequate

④ Very inadequate

⑤ Not sure/No basis to judge

SECTION 2

In this section we examine the general effectiveness of the personnel programs and activities of OPM and your own organization.

5. **How do you feel about the amount of emphasis your organization's personnel program currently places on the following values?**

	Don't know/No basis to judge	Too little	About right	Too much
a. Supporting management flexibility	①	②	③	④
b. Protecting employee rights	①	②	③	④
c. Enforcing personnel laws, rules, and regulations	①	②	③	④
d. Complying with the merit principles	①	②	③	④

6. **How effective do you feel that OPM has been in the following of its activities over the past 2 years?**

	Don't know/No basis to judge	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Effective	Very effective
a. Monitoring agency personnel systems to detect possible abuses	①	②	③	④	⑤
b. Evaluating how agency use of "human resources" affects success of line programs	①	②	③	④	⑤
c. Providing general management and supervisory training	①	②	③	④	⑤
d. Providing technical assistance and support on implementation of new programs or initiatives	①	②	③	④	⑤
e. Providing information and assistance to the public concerning availability of Federal employment	①	②	③	④	⑤
f. Carrying out personnel research and development efforts directly or in cooperation with agencies	①	②	③	④	⑤
g. Assisting agencies in improving their personnel programs and systems	①	②	③	④	⑤
h. Initiating efforts to improve the Federal personnel management system by simplification and deregulation	①	②	③	④	⑤

7. **If a personnel abuse (e.g., prohibited personnel practice) occurred in your organization, how effective would each of the following be in correcting that abuse?**

	Don't know/No basis to judge	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Effective	Very effective
a. Your organization's internal personnel management review system	①	②	③	④	⑤
b. OPM evaluation and compliance audit system	①	②	③	④	⑤
c. An employee "blowing the whistle" to the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) Special Counsel	①	②	③	④	⑤
d. An employee "blowing the whistle" to your organization's Inspector General or internal audit head	①	②	③	④	⑤
e. An employee appealing to the Merit Systems Protection Board	①	②	③	④	⑤
f. An employee filing a grievance	①	②	③	④	⑤
g. An employee filing an EEO complaint	①	②	③	④	⑤

SECTION 3

In this section we ask your opinions on specific program areas in personnel management. At the beginning of all except the first subsection, you will be asked how much you know about your organization's use of certain programs. (If you are not knowledgeable about a program, you will be asked to skip to the next set of questions.)

Delegation of Authority

8. **What do you think about the amount of authority that your organization has to take personnel actions without prior approval from OPM?**

① Too much
② About right
③ Too little
④ Don't know/No basis to judge

9. **What do you think about the amount of authority your immediate organization (personnel office) has to carry out its job without prior approval from higher level personnel authorities in your agency?**

① Too much
② About right
③ Too little
④ Don't know/No basis to judge

10. **What do you think about the amount of authority your line managers have to carry out their jobs without prior approval from their personnel offices?**

① Too much
② About right
③ Too little
④ Don't know/No basis to judge

Uniform Guidelines

11. **How knowledgeable are you about the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (Uniform Guidelines)* which require that selection procedures be validated?**

① Very knowledgeable
② Somewhat knowledgeable
③ Know too little about them to comment
(PLEASE **SKIP** TO QUESTION 15)

12. **On what percentage of the jobs in your organization have job analyses been done?**

① Job analyses are not done in my organization.
② 1-25%
③ 26-50%
④ 51-75%
⑤ 76-100%
⑥ Don't know/No basis to judge

	Don't know/No basis to judge	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
13. My organization has adequate data with which to make adverse impact determinations under the *Uniform Guidelines*	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
14. The *Uniform Guidelines* are applied in my organization	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥

Affirmative Action Programs

15. **The Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) was implemented to fulfill a requirement of the Civil Service Reform Act. FEORP's goal is to eliminate the underrepresentation of minorities and women in various categories of civil service employment. Does your organization have a FEORP Program?**

① Yes
② No
③ Don't know
} PLEASE **SKIP** TO QUESTION 18

16. **How knowledgeable are you about the operation of the FEORP program in your organization?**

① Very knowledgeable
② Somewhat knowledgeable
③ Know too little about it to comment
(PLEASE **SKIP** TO QUESTION 18)

17. **Has FEORP caused your organization to identify and hire qualified women and minority applicants which you otherwise would not have recruited?**

① Yes
② No
③ Not sure

Performance Appraisal Systems

18. **How knowledgeable are you about each of the following performance appraisal systems in your organization?**

	Know too little about it to comment	Somewhat knowledgeable	Very knowledgeable
a. Performance Management System (PMS)	①	②	③
b. Performance Management and Recognition System (PMRS)	①	②	③
c. Senior Executive Service (SES)	①	②	③

(If you answered "3" to a, b, and c, PLEASE **SKIP** TO QUESTION 22.)

19. In your opinion, what impact has each of the three performance appraisal systems had on your organization's effectiveness?

	Don't know/No basis to judge	Greatly impeded effectiveness	Somewhat impeded effectiveness	No impact one way or another	Somewhat improved effectiveness	Greatly improved effectiveness
a. PMS	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
b. PMRS	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
c. SES	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥

20. Overall, how would you rate the policy guidance which OPM has issued on each of the performance appraisal systems over the past 2 years?

	Don't know/No basis to judge	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good
a. PMS	①	②	③	④	⑤
b. PMRS	①	②	③	④	⑤
c. SES	①	②	③	④	⑤

21. Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of OPM's oversight of each of the performance appraisal systems in your organization over the past 2 years?

	Don't know/No basis to judge	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Effective	Very effective
a. PMS	①	②	③	④	⑤
b. PMRS	①	②	③	④	⑤
c. SES	①	②	③	④	⑤

Personnel Management Evaluation

22. How knowledgeable are you about the operation of regulatory compliance and evaluation activities in your organization?

① Very knowledgeable
② Somewhat knowledgeable
③ Know too little about them to comment
(PLEASE **SKIP** TO QUESTION 27)

To what extent do you believe each of the following statements is true:

	Don't know/No basis to judge	To no extent	To a little extent	To some extent	To a considerable extent	To a very great extent
23. Periodic reviews of individual personnel actions are performed in my organization specifically for the purpose of assuring proper application of laws, regulations, or procedures	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
24. The results of my organization's regulatory compliance reviews are used to take corrective action	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
25. Personnel management evaluation reviews done in my organization identify human resource management problems and help improve organizational effectiveness	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
26. Currently my agency's program evaluation system places more emphasis on regulatory compliance reviews than broad-based information gathering and analysis	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥

Selection of First Line GS/GM Supervisors

27. How knowledgeable are you about the methods, systems, etc., used to select new GS/GM supervisors in your organization?

① Very knowledgeable
② Somewhat knowledgeable
③ Know too little about them to comment
(PLEASE **SKIP** TO QUESTION 30)

28. **Are there methods, techniques, forms, etc., which are designed solely for the purpose of evaluating "supervisory aptitudes" which are used in making GS/GM supervisory selections in your organization?**

① Yes
② No
③ Not sure

(OPTIONAL: If you answered "Yes" to Question 28, please describe the one technique or method, etc., which you feel is most effective, in the space provided for additional comments on the back page of this booklet.)

29. **In evaluating candidates for first line GS/GM supervisory positions in your organization, which of the following is typically given more emphasis?**

① Competence in the technical area supervised
② Competence in "supervisory" skills and abilities (e.g., leadership, communication)
③ Both 1 and 2 are considered equally
④ Neither 1 nor 2 is considered
⑤ Don't know/No basis to judge

Education and Counseling of Employees

NOTE: In this section, "employee services" denotes such areas as procedures for filing a grievance, health insurance options, leave benefits, retirement options, etc.

30. **How knowledgeable are you about your organization's efforts to disseminate information on employee services?**

① Very knowledgeable
② Somewhat knowledgeable
③ Know too little about them to comment
(PLEASE **SKIP** TO QUESTION 33)

31. **To what extent does the information disseminated from your organization assist employees in understanding their rights, responsibilities, etc., concerning employee services?**

① To a very great extent
② To a considerable extent
③ To some extent
④ To a little extent
⑤ To no extent
⑥ Don't know/No basis to judge

32. **Please respond to the following statement: "There are enough trained personnelists available to counsel employees on issues related to employee services."**

① Strongly agree
② Agree
③ Neither agree nor disagree
④ Disagree
⑤ Strongly disagree
⑥ Don't know/No basis to judge

SECTION 4

The questions in this section deal with topics in the personnel management area which have received increased attention over the past several years.

33. **In your opinion, how would modification of the Hatch Act to permit Federal employees greater opportunity for political activity affect the operation of the Merit System, in general?**

① It would have a positive effect on the work environment
② It would have no effect on the work environment
③ It would have a negative effect on the work environment
④ Don't know/No basis to judge

	Yes	No	Not sure/No basis to judge
34. Does your organization have any regulations, policies, or procedures in place to deal with drug testing of the work force?	①	②	③
35. Does your organization have any regulations, policies, or procedures in place to deal with AIDS in the work place (in addition to those issued by OPM)?	①	②	③

Don't know/No basis to judge
To no extent
To a little extent
To some extent
To a considerable extent
To a very great extent

36. To what extent do you believe that the following actions, if taken, can lead to improved personnel management in the Federal work force?

a. Simplification of Federal personnel regulations and policies ..... ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

b. Reduction in the volume of Federal personnel regulations and policies ..... ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

c. Increased delegation of personnel authorities from the Office of Personnel Management to agencies ..... ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

d. Increased delegation of personnel authorities from agency personnel offices to line managers ..... ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

37. To what extent do you believe the following actions have been achieved since the passage of the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act?

a. Simplification of Federal personnel regulations and policies ..... ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

b. Reduction in the volume of Federal personnel regulations and policies ..... ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

c. Increased delegation of personnel authorities from the Office of Personnel Management to agencies ..... ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

d. Increased delegation of personnel authorities from agency personnel offices to line managers ..... ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

SECTION 5

Demographic Information

The following information is needed to help with the statistical analyses of all question responses. All your responses are confidential, and will not be associated with you individually. Your individual responses will not be seen by anyone within your organization.

38. Where is your job located?

① Within Washington, D.C., metropolitan area

② Outside Washington, D.C., metropolitan area

39. What is the primary function of the office in which you currently work?

① Operating personnel *only;* e.g., providing day-to-day personnel services to an organization

② Staff personnel *only;* e.g., writing policy, providing guidance to other personnelists, evaluating programs, etc.

③ Operating *and* staff personnel

④ None of the above

⑤ Don't know/No basis to judge

40. What is your current job series?

① 201 (Personnel Management Specialist)

② 212 (Personnel Staffing Specialist)

③ 221 (Position Classification Specialist)

④ 230 (Employee Relations Specialist)

⑤ 233 (Labor Relations Specialist)

⑥ 235 (Employee Development Specialist)

⑦ Other (Please specify) _____

41. Where do you currently work?

① Agriculture

② Commerce

DEFENSE

③ Air Force

④ Army

⑤ Navy

⑥ Other DoD

⑦ Education

⑧ Energy

⑨ Environmental Protection Agency

⑩ General Services Administration

⑪ Health and Human Services

⑫ Housing and Urban Development

⑬ Interior

⑭ Justice

⑮ Labor

⑯ NASA

⑰ Office of Personnel Management

⑱ Small Business Administration

⑲ State, AID, or ICA

⑳ Transportation

㉑ Treasury

㉒ Veterans Administration

㉓ Other

42. How long have you worked in your current agency?

① Less than 1 year

② 1 to less than 2 years

③ 2 to less than 5 years

④ 5 to less than 10 years

⑤ 10 years or more

43. How long have you worked in the Federal personnel field?

① Less than 1 year

② 1 to less than 2 years

③ 2 to less than 10 years

④ 10 to less than 20 years

⑤ 20 to less than 30 years

⑥ 30 years or more

44. Are you a supervisor (i.e., do you sign performance appraisals for other employees)?

① Yes

② No

③ Not sure

45. What is your current grade level?

① 11

② 12

③ 13

④ 14

⑤ 15 (or equivalent)

⑥ 16 (or equivalent)

⑦ SES

⑧ Other (Please specify) _____

46. Are you?

① Male

② Female

47. Are you?

① American Indian or Alaskan Native

② Asian or Pacific Islander

③ Black, not of Hispanic origin

④ White, not of Hispanic origin

⑤ Hispanic

⑥ Other

48. Were you employed in the competitive civil service prior to the Civil Service Reform Act (i.e., prior to 1978)?

① Yes

② No

49. Which type of organizational structure best describes your office?

① Specialist-oriented, i.e., divided into functional branches (e.g., Recruitment & Placement, Training) in which employees perform work primarily in one particular function

② Generalist-oriented, i.e., not divided by personnel functional areas but, instead, employees perform work in a variety of functional areas

③ Other (Please explain) _____

SECTION 6

The following are questions regarding various issues in personnel management. We would appreciate your taking the time to comment. Please respond in your own words to each question.

50. In your opinion, what actions taken by OPM in the past 2 years have had a *positive* impact on the civil service system?

51. In your opinion, what actions taken by OPM in the past 2 years have had a *negative* impact on the civil service system?

52. Overall, have things improved, worsened, or stayed the same in Federal personnel management since the implementation of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978? Please explain.

53. Has your organization been involved in any successful initiatives, special programs, etc., to improve productivity or organizational effectiveness, either within your office or throughout your agency? If so, please briefly describe these activities.

54. Which aspects of personnel administration or management currently performed by the personnel office should be performed by the line managers in your organization? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of delegating these functions?

55. Please use the space below to write in additional comments you wish to make about any of the questions in this survey or any other issues. IF ADDRESSING QUESTIONS IN THIS SURVEY, PLEASE WRITE THE NUMBER OF THE QUESTION BEING ADDRESSED BESIDE THE COMMENT.

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A Report to the President
and the Congress of the United States
by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board